

## **Business Writing/Reporting**

JOUR 3170

202 Meeman Journalism

T-Th 9:40 – 11:05 a.m.

Spring 2017

Instructor: Thomas J. Hrach, Ph.D.

Office: Meeman Journalism Building, Room 308

Office Hours: 11 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. Tuesdays: 9:30 a.m. to noon Fridays

Phone: 901.678.4779; Email: thrach@memphis.edu

## **COURSE REQUIREMENTS**

### **CATALOG DESCRIPTION:**

Introduction to business writing and reporting and to the opportunities and issues in this growing field. Focuses on covering companies, the people who work for them and the consumers of their goods and services along with issues of the economy, finance and the stock market.

### **PREREQUISITE:**

JOUR 3120

### **COURSE MATERIALS:**

Required:

- *Understanding Wall Street*, Jeffrey B. Little and Lucien Rhodes, fifth edition.
- *Show Me the Money: Writing Business and Economic Stories for Mass Communication*, Chris Roush, 2010, Routledge Communication, second edition.
- *The New York Times Reader: Business and Economics*, Mark Tatge, 2010, CQ Press.
- One business related book that will be topical. It will be discussed first day of class
- One business related film that will be topical. It will be discussed first day of class.
- *The Wall Street Journal*, Monday through Friday.

Should already have:

- *The Associated Press Style Manual*.
- *Media Writers Handbook*

### **CLASSROOM FORMAT:**

Class will be conducted through lecture and discussion and writing assignments done outside of class.

**GRADING:**

Writing assignments (14 at 20 pts each)	280
Midterm exam	50
In-class exercises	70
Quizzes	80
Online site	20
Total	500

A 93 to 100 percent  
A – 90 to 92 percent  
B + 87 to 89 percent  
B 83 to 86 percent  
B – 80 to 82 percent  
C + 77 to 79 percent  
C 70 to 76 percent  
D + 67 to 69 percent  
D 60 to 66 percent  
F 0 to 59 percent

**Writing Assignments**

Each week students will complete a writing assignment. Some weeks the assignment is simple existing of just a few lines. Other weeks business stories will be due, and some weeks there will be a re-write of the business story due. In total, the students will complete four business stories and then a final in-depth business story. Each of the weekly writing assignments is worth 20 points.

**In-class Assignments**

During class students will be given an assignment to complete one day per week. The assignment will include a short item to be written and submitted to the dropbox. Each assignment is worth 5 points. One of the early assignments will be to investigate and then choose three company stocks. The final assignment will be to determine how the stocks fared during the course. The student who makes the most money (or loses the least) gets a 5-point bonus.

**Quizzes**

Students will be quizzed on readings for the week. The readings will come from the textbook, the business related book, the business related film and the Wall Street Journal.

**Online sites**

All students are required to have an online site and post their work onto the site.

## TENTATIVE TIMETABLE

Week of:	Topic	First day	Second Day
Week 1	Course overview: The dynamic field of financial journalism.		Writing Assignment 1
Week 2	Getting information about public and private companies	In class exercise	Writing Assignment 2
Week 3	Economic indicators and how to report on them.	In class exercise	Writing Assignment 3
Week 4	The SEC and what it is all about.	In class exercise	Writing Assignment 4
Week 5	Balance Sheet and Income Statement	In class exercise	Writing Assignment 5
Week 6	Earnings stories and financial ratios	In class exercise	Writing Assignment 6
Week 7	Bankruptcy and relevance to economic health	In class exercise	Writing Assignment 7
Week 8	Midterm exam		
Week 9	Business strategy: From idea to reality	In class exercise	Writing Assignment 8
Week 10	Business Journalism and Ethics	In class exercise	Writing Assignment 9
Week 11	Business Strategy: From idea to reality/IPOs	In class exercise	Writing Assignment 10
Week 12	Who runs companies? Who works at companies?	In class exercise	Writing Assignment 11
Week 13	Real estate and retailing	In class exercise	Writing Assignment 12
Week 14	Consumers and personal finance		Writing Assignment 13
Week 15	Final Exam		Writing Assignment 14

### **FIVE PILLARS FOR JOUR 3170**

- **Professionalism:** Class discussions will focus on issues related to the ethics of reporting and conflicts of interest.
- **Writing:** Students will complete several writing projects during the course related to business coverage. The course culminates in a final in-depth reporting story that includes multiple sources and documents.
- **Multimedia:** The final in-depth reporting story will require some multi-media element that could include a photo slideshow, video, podcast, graphic chart, map or data visualization.
- **Critical Thinking:** Discussions will focus on how to find, evaluate and use news sources. All writing assignments will be critiqued and dissected to determine the best way to present news about business.
- **Media Literacy:** Students in the class will read two business related books, read business news stories and watch one business-related film. Discussions and quizzes will center on the subject matter and also the approach used to report the news. The key will be to examine what makes credible reporting.

### **PROFESSIONAL VALUES AND COMPETENCIES FOR JOUR 3170, BUSINESS WRITING:**

- Think critically, creatively and independently;
- Conduct research and evaluate information by methods appropriate to the communications professions in which they work;
- Write correctly and clearly in forms and styles appropriate for the communications professions, audiences and purposes they serve;
- Critically evaluate their own work and that of others for accuracy and fairness, clarity, appropriate style and grammatical correctness;
- Apply basic numerical and statistical concepts;

### **HOW PROFESSIONAL VALUES AND COMPETENCIES WILL BE MET FOR JOUR 3170, BUSINESS WRITING:**

#### **Cognitive objectives to be mastered (ability to explain, analyze, understand, think critically):**

- Recognize the characteristics of news through discussion, story idea brainstorming sessions and assignments.
- Use in-person and online sources to research companies, businesses and individuals.
- Complete several writing assignments that contain news about companies, businesses and people.
- Discuss and evaluate student writing in class.
- Use basic spreadsheets and databases to seek information about companies, businesses and people.

**Performance standards to be met (demonstrable skills, abilities and techniques, applied competencies:)**

- Write one news article about a local company or business.
- Write one analysis of a publicly traded company.
- Write one feature story about some person involved in a local small business or large corporation.
- Write one feature story focusing on personal finances.
- Read business articles and news analysis about issues going on in business and finance.

**HOW ASSESSMENT OF STUDENT LEARNING WILL BE MET FOR JOUR 3170, BUSINESS WRITING:**

Business Writing is focuses on covering companies, the people who work for them and the consumers of their goods and services along with issues of the economy, finance and the stock market. The goal is for each student to be able to complete the basic tasks of any business writer and be able to understand basic concepts of business and finance.

*Awareness:*

- Recognize the importance of knowing about business and finance.

*Understanding:*

- Understand the basics about stocks, bonds, financial statements and economic indicators.
- Appreciate the value of the free market and its role in business and finance.
- Recognize the qualities of what is newsworthy.
- Learn how experts in the field do their work.
- Find out what opportunities exist in the field of business reporting.

*Application:*

- Read and analyze business stories from some of the top business publications in the country.
- Write news stories and business analyses in proper news style.
- Find and organize data and numbers for a news story about a company or business.
- Keep abreast of news in the business world.

**PROFESSIONAL VALUES AND COMPETENCIES FOR JOURNALISM PROGRAM:**

The Accrediting Council on Education in Journalism and Mass Communication requires that, irrespective of their particular specialization, all graduates should be aware of certain core values and competencies and be to

- Understand and apply the principles and laws of freedom of speech and press, for the country in which the institution that invites ACEJMC is located, as well as receive instruction in and understand the range of systems of freedom of expression around the world, including the right to dissent, to monitor and criticize power, and to assemble and petition for redress of grievances;
- Demonstrate an understanding of the history and role of professionals and institutions in shaping communications;

- Demonstrate an understanding of gender, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation and, as appropriate, other forms of diversity in domestic society in relation to mass communications.
- Demonstrate an understanding of the diversity of peoples and cultures and of the significance and impact of mass communications in a global society.
- Understand concepts and apply theories in the use and presentation of images and information;
- Demonstrate an understanding of professional ethical principles and work ethically in pursuit of truth, accuracy, fairness and diversity;
- Think critically, creatively and independently;
- Conduct research and evaluate information by methods appropriate to the communications professions in which they work;
- Write correctly and clearly in forms and styles appropriate for the communications professions, audiences and purposes they serve;
- Critically evaluate their own work and that of others for accuracy and fairness, clarity, appropriate style and grammatical correctness;
- Apply basic numerical and statistical concepts;
- Apply tools and technologies appropriate for the communications professions in which they work.

#### **ASSESSMENT OF STUDENT LEARNING FOR JOURNALISM PROGRAM:**

The Council seeks to promote student learning and encourages experimentation and innovation.

Assessment is a system of evaluation of student learning at the course or unit level (as opposed to grading at the individual level). Three criteria should guide assessment of student learning:

- *Awareness*: familiarity with specific information, including facts, concepts, theories, laws and regulations, processes and effects.
- *Understanding*: assimilation and comprehension of information, concepts, theories and ideas.
- *Application*: competence in relating and applying skills, information, concepts, theories and ideas to the accomplishment of tasks.

## **DEPARTMENT POLICIES**

### **PORTFOLIO REQUIREMENT:**

All Department of Journalism and Strategic Media undergraduate students are required to develop and maintain an active portfolio of their work. Students are to begin the portfolio in JOUR 2121 and contribute to it during every skills course thereafter. The portfolio should contain samples of the student's work from courses and/or professional experience and should develop as the student builds skills. Portfolios will undergo a final review while students are enrolled in the capstone course for their concentrations.

### **EMAIL:**

You must have your UM email account activated. If you are using another provider, such as Google, you are required to have your UM email forwarded to that account. Go to <http://iam.memphis.edu> to implement forwarding of UM email. You are required to check your email daily. You are responsible for complying with any email sent to you by your professor or the university.

### **MOBILE PHONES AND LAPTOPS:**

Some classes require a tablet, laptop or a smartphone to be used during class or to complete class assignments. Others do not allow them. Your instructor will set the policy for her/her specific class.

### **ATTENDANCE:**

Class attendance is mandatory in the Department of Journalism. You may be assigned a failing grade for the semester for nonattendance, or habitual late arrival. Students are permitted three total unexcused absences without penalty. After three absences, the student's final grade will be deducted one letter grade for each absence. After seven unexcused absences, the student will fail the course. Absences for illness and other catastrophic emergencies, such as a death in the family, must be documented (e.g. doctor's note or obituary) to be excused from the total absence count. Students with excessive unexcused absences are encouraged to withdraw from the course prior to the drop deadline.

### **DEADLINES:**

All deadlines are firm. This is journalism and mass communications. Assignments turned in late will NOT be graded. Late work is not accepted unless prior arrangements have been made with the instructor. Students are NOT permitted to make up assignments, quizzes, tests, etc. that occurred during an unexcused absence. Students who will miss class and/or a deadline because of an excused absence are expected to notify the instructor immediately upon knowing the absence will occur; exceptions will be made for reasonable circumstances. Students who are absent during the final exam are not permitted to make up the exam and will earn a grade of 0, which might result in failure of the course.

### **ACADEMIC INTEGRITY:**

In addition to university-wide policies stated in the Code of Student Rights and Responsibilities, the Department of Journalism considers making up quotes from sources, turning in substantially the same assignment for credit in two different courses, a student receiving any assistance from others for work assigned to be done on his/her own, and violations of copyright law as acts of academic dishonesty punishable to the

degree determined appropriate by the course instructor and department chair. Penalties might include grade reductions or dismissal of the student from the university.

“Your written work may be submitted to Turnitin.com, or a similar electronic detection method, for an evaluation of the originality of your ideas and proper use and attribution of sources. As part of this process, you may be required to submit electronic as well as hard copies of your written work, or be given other instructions to follow. By taking this course, you agree that all assignments may undergo this review process and that the assignment may be included as a source document in Turnitin.com’s restricted access database solely for the purpose of detecting plagiarism in such documents. Any assignment not submitted according to the procedures given by the instructor may be penalized or may not be accepted at all.” (Office of Legal Counsel, October 17, 2005)

### **Intellectual property and copyright guidelines**

1. Ideas cannot be copyrighted, but the way they are described can.
2. Anything set down in a tangible form, i.e., written, is by law copyrighted.
3. If, in a paraphrase, your work is “substantially similar” to a copyrighted work, you are guilty of copyright infringement.
4. A citation indicates where you got material. However, that portion you do not show as a direct quote must be “substantially original” to you. In other words, you can’t just paste in something from another’s work, put a citation at the bottom and call it your own. You need a full rewrite in your own words and syntax so the unquoted material is “substantially original” to you.

**Plagiarism: From UM Student Handbook:** The term “plagiarism” includes, but is not limited to, the use, by paraphrase or direct quotation, of the published or unpublished work of another person without full or clear acknowledgement. It also includes the unacknowledged use of materials prepared by another person or agency engaged in the selling of term papers or other academic materials.

### **ONLINE SETEs:**

You are urged to complete the SETEs evaluation of this course. Once your instructor has posted your grade, you can immediately see that grade, provided you completed a teacher evaluation for that class. How to access your evaluation forms: Log in using your UUID and email password; click on the gray “Student” tab; complete an evaluation for each course listed and hit the “Submit” button at the bottom of the form. It will only take a few minutes of your time. We take the evaluations very seriously and use them to improve courses and instructional quality. Your feedback is essential and will be appreciated.

### **DISABILITY:**

Any student who feels s/he may need an accommodation based on the impact of a disability should contact me privately to discuss your specific needs. Please contact the Office for Disability Services at 901-678-2880 in 110 Wilder Tower to coordinate reasonable accommodations for students with documented disabilities.



**DIVERSITY:**

Students are required to respect the differences of others and treat all persons with respect. Discriminatory, derogatory and threatening language or behavior will not be tolerated. Further, students are expected to consider their work through a diverse mind. Mass communications reach a mass audience, and students should be aware of how those messages are received by a diverse audience.

**WEATHER POLICY:**

Check with local media and the University of Memphis website regarding inclement weather. If the university is closed or classes are canceled, this course will not meet. However, students will still be responsible for that day's work.

**AP STYLE AND GRAMMAR:**

All written work in this class should follow the AP Stylebook and accepted rules of grammar and punctuation. If you don't know the style for a particular phrase, look it up or ask your classmates or the instructor.